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H – 2247

International Court of Justice

H2247 – 0001

H2247 - 0002

Schacht Exhibit No. 31

Brief Dr. Hjalmar Schachts
an Mr. Fraser vom
16. Oktober 1939

INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL
NURNBERG, GERMANY
Sc Exhibit 31
May 2 Filed 1946

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Schacht Exhibit No. 31

Brief Dr. Hjalmar Schachts an
Mr. Fraser
vom 16.Oktober 1939.

Duplicate Berlin,Oct.16th,1939.

Dear Mr. Fraser,

last week I heard from Hechler that you had cabled to the BIS about my present activities. I have asked Hechler to tell you that I was still formally a Reichsminister but that I had no activities and that I hoped to be useful at a given time. Ever since I have thought a great deal whether I could help to prevent the disaster which is threatening civilization from the present conflict. When suggesting something by this letter to you I would like to emphasize that I have not talked about the following to anyone and that I am writing entirely on my personal responsibility. Whatever I am going to say is therefor the personal idea of an individual and can and must not compromize anyone else.

The underlying feeling which I have is, that more than anyone else the President of the United States could and should do something. It is very difficult to expect an initiative for negociations to come from one of the belligerants. On the other hand it is certainly true, that the War of 1914-1918 had been won by the Americans, that the armistice was based on the 14 points of President Wilson, a "democratic" President, and that America was not able to impose a Peace Treaty on the lines of those 14 points. The only conclusion which she drew therefrom was that she rejected the proposed ~~peace~~ treaty

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and left Europe alone. Personally I believe therefore that America should try to achieve what she failed to achieve in 1919, because it is perfectly clear that whatever has happened since, has its roots in the unfortunate Versailles Treaty. A President who will bring about a just and lasting peace will become the savior of the world. Now I know very well that President Roosevelt has endeavoured very much to prevent a new war and I admit that he may feel rather disappointed about the answers or non-answers which he got from this side. But all this should not prevent a responsible and most leading statesman from looking out for any possibility of help. May be that an official initiative from the Presidents side may not be feasable and certainly nothing should be done which would hurt the prestige of the President but what I have in mind is some private initiative backed in a certain way by the President, in order to gain time and to find an approach to more official talks. My feeling is that gaining time will help a great deal at the present moment.

There are people who think it might be too early to discuss definite plans before certain conditions have taken place. I am starting from another point. My feeling is that the earlier discussions would be opened the easier it will be to influence the development of certain existing conditions. I feel certain that the time is not too far off when it will be most useful to have definite ideas about the future solution. None of the belligerants, whatever events may arrive, will disarm before knowing that the present conflict is to be followed by a just and noble peace instead of a dictate. Such certainty cannot be obtained by public speeches of the belligerants, because we have seen too many broken promises during these last two decades. To overcome the existing state of distrust a neutral plan must be

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elaborated beforehand, which will certainly impose sacrifices to both parties but also offer very clear advantages and which will give to the whole world the conviction of a peace tolerable by everybody and lasting for more than one generation. I feel to be able to contribute to such a plan about which I have thought a great deal and which has kept me busy for years.

From all these feelings, thoughts and deliberations the following suggestion has sprung up; You invited me very kindly early this year to come over to America and lecture somewhere. At that time it was impossible for me to accept, but I accepted in principle. I wonder whether it would be possible now to bring me over for the same purpose in order to lecture about say "World economy in war and peace times". If it would become known that I was going over, the mere fact might raise a lot of combinations, rumours and hopes which all might contribute to defer fateful happenings. Once being over personal conversations may help to find a way out and prevent greater disaster.

Of course you could not invite me without the agreement of your Government and I could not go without the agreement of my Government. But it is just this fact which would underline the importance of the visit. Now I do not know how your President would react and I must leave this to you, I neither know how my Government would react. My personal position is that I am a formal member of the Cabinet, that I have been removed from official influence but that I have certainly not lost their respect. Therefor it might be difficult for them to reject any suggestion of the above kind.

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As to the procedure to be followed, my thoughts are these; You should send me a cable signed by you and conveniently by others, inviting me on behalf of some important non-political Institute to come over and lecture about "world economy in war and peace times", as I had in principle promised to you early this year. The invitation should be added by a statement that the U.S.A.President had been informed about and agreed to such invitation and that the President expects me to pay him my respects when being over because he had known me so well. It might further be useful if the invitation and the accompanying circumstances as above would be communicated by the White House or the Secretary of State to our Chargé d'Affaires in order that he might inform our Government. After having received the invitation I would then ask my Government to agree. You might further think it useful to privately inform some of our mutual friends. On the other hand everything has to be avoided what could prejudice the free decision of my Government, because it must be avoided to embarrass anyone. It must therefor be understood that the contents of this letter must remain strictly confidential.

If you agree to my suggestion it would of course be of the highest importance to act as quickly as possible, before anything irrevocable might happen. If your answer would be to the positive then no information to me besides the invitation is necessary. If however your answer is negative or if you want some further information please cable to Hechler Basle with whom I shall arrange to pass on any message from you.

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Please give my kindest regards to all my friends over there and believe me, dear Mr. Fraser, to be with all good wishes and kindest regards

very sincerely

Yours

(sgd.) Dr.Hjalmar Schacht

Hierdurch bescheinige ich, dass das auf vorstehenden Seiten abgedruckte Schriftstück eine wortgetreue Wiedergabe des Briefes von Dr. Hjalmar Schacht an Mr. Fraser vom 16. Oktober 1939 ist.

Nürnberg, den 3. April 1946.

Dr. jur. Herbert Kraus
Professor der Rechte

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Filed May 2, 1946
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Deputy

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